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Great Bay Coast Watch to Participate in the 2000 Great North American Secchi Dip-In July 1-16.

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NOTE TO MEDIA: Reporters interested in observing the Great Bay Coast Watch in action on its next monitoring day (July 17) should contact: Steve Adams, NH Sea Grant Office, at 603-749-1565, or by e-mail at steve.adams@unh.edu.

DURHAM, N.H. -- The seventh annual Great North American Secchi Dip-In, a two-week long event that unites the efforts of water monitoring groups across the nation, takes place Saturday, July 1, through Sunday, July 16.

Used to measure the transparency of water, a secchi disk is a round piece of wood painted black and white. Monitors lower the secchi into the water until it disappears from view. That depth is an indirect measure of the amount of suspended particles, such as algae, microscopic organisms and soil, in the water.

In the New Hampshire Seacoast Region, the Great Bay Coast Watch will be participating in the Dip-In. A 10-year-old volunteer monitoring program coordinated by Sea Grant Extension at the University of New Hampshire, the Watch covers 21 sites, measuring parameters such as water transparency, salinity, dissolved oxygen and fecal coliform. The information it gathers is kept in a database at UNH's Jackson Estuarine Laboratory.

Ann Reid, Watch coordinator, and other experts train the volunteers in water monitoring techniques. The Watch has found that the waters of Great Bay are generally in good shape. There have been a few sites that had measurements outside of the acceptable limits, and those spots are being monitored more closely.

The Watch currently has 90 members, ranging from middle school students to retired professionals. People join for a variety of reasons. Durham resident Michele Wensman, who is home schooling her two children,

Sam (10) and Sophie (8), joined in order to give them an applied marine science curriculum unit. After attending a volunteer training session on water monitoring techniques, Wensman said, "The kids were more than excited after the session, and couldn't wait to learn more." She and her children plan to participate in the water monitoring on a regular basis.

Monitoring takes place one day a month, with measurements taken both at high and low tide. Anyone interested in joining the Watch should contact Ann Reid at (603) 749-1565.

June 23, 2000

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